

BRITISH SUGAR BEET SOCIETY

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ANNUAL LUNCHEON

HELD AT

The Hotel Victoria, Northumberland Avenue, London,

ON

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21st, 1928.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Rt. Hon. GEORGE H. ROBERTS, P.C., in the Chair.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, it is understood that this is a Special General Meeting to deal with one specific question, namely, the suggested cancellation of the registration of the Society. To put the thing in order, I will ask the Secretary to read the notice convening the Meeting. Then I will make a few observations to explain the reasons for the submission.

THE SECRETARY (Mr. W. T. Chadwin) read the following notice:—

Notice is hereby given that a Special General Meeting of the Society will be held at the Hotel Victoria, Northumberland Avenue, W.C. 2, at 11.30, on Wednesday, 21st March, 1928, to consider and, if thought desirable, to pass the following resolutions:—

RESOLVED—

(a) That the British Sugar Beet Society, Limited, has now fulfilled those of its objects for which it was registered in 1915 under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts with limited liability.

(b) That the rules of the Society registered under the said Acts are not now applicable nor convenient under the circumstances in which the Society is being continued.

(c) That application be made to the Registrar of Friendly Societies for the cancellation of the Society's registration as a Society with limited liability.

(d) That the 342 shares of 1s. each held by the Members be cancelled.

(e) That the assets of the Society be at the disposal of the General Committee as elected from time to time by the annual subscribers to the funds of the Society, for the carrying out of the Society's future work.

THE CHAIRMAN: The reason for this Meeting is the fact that when the Society was registered in 1915 it required to have certain trading powers. We had then in view the promotion of the factory which is now known as Home Grown Sugar, Limited, and in order to enable the Society to engage in the promotion of such an undertaking it was desirable that it should be registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts. Moreover, you will remember that at the commencement of the operations of that factory and subsequent factories the Society undertook the sale of beet pulp to introduce it to farmers and to promote knowledge respecting its

feeding value. Those functions have now been taken up by the various factory companies, and certain other functions have been transferred to the National Farmers' Union. Therefore the Society has now become an educational and propagandist body exclusively.

Then, again, certain forms are required under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts. The preparation of these returns involves a good deal of work and necessarily some consequent expenditure, which is unnecessary under present conditions. Therefore we are advised that it is expedient that we should seek cancellation of registration at this juncture. The Society in future, if you approve of these Resolutions, will be deprived of any capacity to embark in trade and, as I have stated, will become exclusively an educational and propagandist body. The funds will be under the control of the Executive Committee as elected by the Members at its annual gatherings. Of course, they will be audited by a Chartered Accountant in the manner in which the accounts of all Societies of reputable standing are dealt with.

I think that that is all that it is necessary for me to say by way of explanation and justification for these Resolutions. I move their adoption accordingly.

I shall esteem it a favour if somebody from the general body of the gathering will second me.

MR. A. L. JESSOPP: I beg to second that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there any question that anybody would like to ask?

MR. J. M. SCOTT: I presume that the Mason Challenge Cup will still be carried on?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. This will not interfere with that at all. You will see that the Cup is here for presentation this year. It is our present intention to keep it under our own control.

MR. J. M. SCOTT: That is what I wanted to know. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there any other question? You will realise that this matter has been exhaustively considered in all its aspects by the Committee. I am simply, as Chairman of the Committee, carrying out the duties of that position. As there are no further questions, I will ask all who approve the Resolutions as set forth in the Notice to signify the same in the customary fashion.

Carried unanimously.

The Meeting then terminated.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Rt. Hon. GEORGE H. ROBERTS, P.C., in the Chair.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Secretary will read the Minutes of the last meeting.

THE SECRETARY accordingly read the Minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there any question on the Minutes? May I sign them on your behalf? ("Agreed.")

There are no letters of regret. I expect that some who are absent will entertain regret afterwards.

It is now my business to report that at a meeting which preceded this it was unanimously resolved that certain resolutions dealing with the question of the cancellation of the registration were carried.

It is my duty as the Chairman of the Executive Committee to submit their Report to you. In so doing, it is not necessary for me to do more than direct your attention to and emphasise some of the points set forth in the Report. You will have noticed on hearing the Minutes which have just been read out that last year the question was raised as to whether the Society had then fulfilled its functions, and whether there was sufficient work in prospect to warrant its continuance. Those who were present last year will remember that whereas on behalf of a certain number of the members of the Society I expressed the view of some who thought that it was unnecessary to continue the Society, it was manifest at the meeting that there was a powerful and influential section who thought that the Society had plenty of work still to undertake. The matter was then referred to the Executive Committee for consideration. It has been considered in all its aspects, with the result that the Committee has determined to recommend to you the continuance of the Society. Arrangements have been made for financing the Society on an economic basis. We venture to hope that whilst our plans contemplate a minimum of expenditure, nevertheless we will be able to achieve a maximum of efficiency, for, after all, societies that spend large sums of money do not necessarily attain the greatest results; but if the spirit which has been demonstrated to us throughout the year is maintained, then we have every reason to advise you that, in our opinion, the Society can be conducted in a way to render signal service to this great new industry. We contemplate that great new issues will from time to time emerge, and it will be helpful to the industry if there is in existence a body, not specifically representing any one of the several interests with which the industry is concerned, but comprising every interest and competent to survey the whole situation in a more judicial manner than is possible by a body representing separate interests. We therefore recommend that the Society be kept in existence, and Colonel Royds and others will at a later stage emphasise to you the necessity of giving as much personal and essential financial support to the industry in the future as possible.

Last year we referred to the fact that four new factory schemes were in contemplation, and it is gratifying to report that the whole of those four factories have been erected and have conducted their first manufacturing campaign. A new company—Sugar Beet and Crop Driers, Ltd.—has been formed to operate a new process to which I will allude at a later stage. The White Paper which has to be presented to Parliament giving the results of the working of the various factories under the provisions of the Subsidy Act was duly presented, showing that there were in 1926 fourteen factories in

operation, five of which were working for the first time, and that with the exception of two of them each earned good profits.

Last year approximately 225,000 acres of beet were grown, as compared with 125,000 acres in 1926, 54,750 acres in 1925, and 22,634 acres in 1924. This means that during the first four-year period of the operation of the subsidy, the growth of sugar beet has increased tenfold. (Cheers.)

Last year was a most unfavourable one from seeding time to harvest; and I am afraid that some who grew beet for the first time felt disheartened by their experience. Nevertheless, you will be interested to know that the Ministry of Agriculture in their General Survey of the agricultural position made a note to this effect: That despite the most unfavourable season, sugar beet suffered relatively less than other crops. Whatever party is put in power, despite the very exaggerated claims of politicians, I think that none will ever be able to control the elements for us. (Laughter.) We hope that such a bad season will not recur, but still it is significant to note that the sugar beet crop suffered relatively less than other crops.

With regard to the amount of sugar turned out last year, I am not in possession of the exact figures. I believe that some have been published, but they are subject to modifications. In 1926, 153,488 tons were produced. The estimate for last year was 230,000 tons, but when the figures are actually tabulated I believe that the production will be something less. The crop last year suffered both in weight and in content, but, as you will observe by the results achieved by the winner of the Cup this year, content suffered even more than weight. Owing to the expiration of the first subsidy period negotiations had to be conducted as between the Factory Companies and the National Farmers' Union with a view to a modification of the price payable to the cultivator in order to meet the new situation. The Society has no responsibility whatever for what occurs there. The Factory Companies and the National Farmers' Union have an agreement whereby, through the principle of collective bargaining, they make their own arrangements. I cannot disguise the fact which we learn from the public Press that neither side is fully satisfied. It exemplifies the British character that a compromise has been reached, and we hope a more or less happy solution. As I have stated, certain functions have been transferred to the National Farmers' Union and to the Factory Companies, and one of the matters with which the Society has nothing to do is the fixation of the price paid for beet.

I think that it does both sides a great deal of good to come into contact with men of practical affairs, men who are not concerned to promote mere individual interests, but to secure the prosperity of a great new industry in this country, and I sincerely hope that all classes concerned in the industry will join up with the Society in order that they may have at their disposal the benefit of the advice and experience of the men who constitute the Society.

The question of factory effluents has been one of great difficulty, and has aroused keen controversy throughout the country. We follow this problem closely and are glad to record that the Factory Companies are exercising

themselves to the utmost to find a solution of this question. No Factory Company is ever concerned to cut athwart the interests of the anglers or others. Their interest is to work in harmony with all sections of the community. They have the active assistance of the various Government Departments concerned, with the many experts at their disposal, and we have no doubt that in due course we will be able to claim that this industry is being carried on with the least possible irritation in the country and that even the most exacting angler will have no legitimate cause for complaint.

I would like at this point to make a reference to an interesting departure which is being experimented in. At our last meeting reference was made to what was then known as the De Vecchis process of treating beet and extracting sugar. It is claimed for this process that, although the beet has to be received within the restricted period of the harvest, yet by a special process of drying the slices it is possible to spread the actual manufacture of sugar over a longer period, thereby regularising employment. Of course, an industry which would work evenly throughout the whole year would be preferable to one which had to restrict its operations to a short period of the year. Your Committee are watching this experiment with keen interest and are glad to observe that a private company has been registered with a view to testing the commercial possibilities of this new process. If the promoters' claims are justified we are sure that other Factory Companies will gladly adapt themselves to the conditions that will then arise.

It is interesting to observe that the journal called *The Farmer and Stockbreeder* organised an exhibition of British agricultural produce last year. I only draw attention to this because the well-known firm of Chivers gave a display of high-class preserves made with beet sugar. I have repeatedly been informed by housewives that beet sugar is not suitable for the manufacture of jam at home. How that idea arose I do not know. It may be that the cane sugar people have a very effective propaganda department. I am an old advertising man myself and I can appreciate how such ideas are circulated in order to uphold the industry that the advertisers represent. This display by Messrs. Chivers showed that a firm of the highest standing in this particular regard uses beet sugar, and after experiments has proved that it is eminently satisfactory for the purpose of making jam and other preserves.

I come to the last matter with which I have to deal, and that is the presentation of the Mason Challenge Cup. This has been won by Mr. H. H. Harris, of New Farm, Besford, Worcestershire. Mr. Harris grew, as you will see, just over 6 acres of beet and secured a yield of 96 tons 5 cwt. It is noteworthy that the yield in this case approximates very closely to the yield secured by Mr. Minter, who took the Cup in the previous year, which helps to bear out the point which I made that beet last year suffered even more in sugar content than it did in weight. Mr. Harris secured a sugar content of 18.7 per cent. Those of us who are in the industry and know what was achieved throughout the country desire to heartily congratulate Mr. Harris on the results that he attained. (Cheers.) We hope that his example will be emulated by other farmers throughout the country and that they will endeavour to outdo Mr. Harris next year. On behalf of the Society and in the name of Mr. Japh Mason I ask Mr. Harris's acceptance of the Challenge Cup, which he will hold for twelve months. I hope, of course, that he will endeavour to hold it for a further twelve months; but, however that may be, the fact that he has it in his possession for twelve months will be a signal honour to himself and a tribute to the standard of farming in this country. In conformity with our usual practice, we ask Mr. Harris, in taking charge of the Challenge Cup for twelve months,

to accept a replica of the Cup, which he will hold permanently as a memento of his success this year and something that he can show to his neighbours in order that they may be inspired to win the Cup for themselves. These replicas are given by members of the Committee because of their interest in the work of the Society, and because they like the winner to have some permanent token of the result that he has achieved. (Cheers.)

Nothing remains more than for me, in the name and on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Society, to move the adoption of the Report. Will somebody favour me by seconding that?

Mr. J. M. SCOTT: I will second it with pleasure. Continuing, he said as a colleague of Mr. Crumpler in connection with the Mason Challenge Cup Award he would like to say, as he said last year, how very much he regretted that the knowledge and data in connection with the sixty-seven entries did not receive more notice in the Press. He regretted that other growers had not an opportunity of gaining information about the methods of cultivation, the artificial manures used, and the work done by Mr. Harris, who, under the adverse circumstances of a difficult season, had grown a remarkable crop of 16 tons per acre with a sugar content of 18.7 per cent. He suggested last year that the Committee might find a way of dealing with this matter more fully in the Annual Report, because he thought that it would be of very great value to other growers if such knowledge was made available to them.

THE CHAIRMAN appreciated the suggestion. He had intended to ask one of his colleagues to convey to Mr. Scott, and through him to Mr. Crumpler, their appreciation of the services which they had again rendered. He remembered, when acknowledging the suggestion of Mr. Scott last year, undertaking that the Committee would give it further consideration. Mr. Scott would realise that the Society had been passing through a period of upheaval, but the Committee would give the matter attention. If he understood Mr. Scott aright, he would like other growers to know what kind of land Mr. Harris had, what sort of manure he used, and, generally, what his principle of cultivation was. He would undertake to see that the Committee considered that aspect of the matter with a view to a wider dissemination of the information to guide other growers in this country.

MR. EDWARD OLIVER (Sudbury) wished to draw attention to what he considered to be an omission. It was with reference to the number of persons to whom the sugar beet industry gave employment. Mr. Walter Runciman in the House of Commons, when the question of the subsidy came up, stated that it provided work for only some 7000 people. That was a misstatement which he thought ought to be corrected by the Society. He had hoped that something would have fallen from the Chairman that morning in regard to it. There were some eighteen factories at work, and they each engaged some 500 hands at least. That made 9000. There was also the still larger figure of those employed on the land. There were some 225,000 acres under sugar beet, and it was said that 10 acres would give employment to one man throughout the year. That brought the total up to some 33,500. That was a very different figure from that stated by Mr. Runciman. Taxpayers ought to know what was being done with their money.

COL. SIR GEORGE COURTHOPE, Bt., M.P., said that the factories as a whole were not yet secure of the beet acreage which they required. There had been little difficulties to be overcome and friction in certain districts which had delayed matters. Anyone who helped the factories to secure the balance of acreage which they wanted would be rendering a real service to the industry, because the last 15 or 20 per cent. of acreage required for economic manufacture were of infinitely greater

importance than the first 15 or 20 per cent., relatively. They made a very large difference in the prospect of a successful season. He hoped that every member of the Society, as opportunity offered, would do what he could for the industry in that respect.

MR. J. M. SCOTT said that if Sir George could get the factories to assure farmers that they would not export dried sugar beet pulp, it would be a tremendous help. Farmers to-day appreciated that the pulp was a very valuable feed.

COL. COURTHOPE said that he was not in a position to give an assurance on behalf of the factories, as he was associated with one group only, but he knew that the factories generally desired that the pulp should go back to the farms from which the sugar beet came. They had no desire whatever to send it abroad. That was the last thing they wanted. Really a misconception had arisen through, he thought, most misleading statements which had been made at different times. As recently as the early summer of 1927 some of the factories had a very large stock of dried pulp on hand from the previous campaign, which they were unable to market in this country. It was essential that they should clear their warehouses so as to get their places ready for the new campaign. The balance was sold abroad because the home market would not take it. Probably with that experience in their minds, perhaps rather reckless efforts were made by them last year to get a form of forward contract for sale of pulp in this country. One big group at least was so successful in its propaganda that it contracted to sell a great deal more pulp than, when the time came, it was able to produce. The farmers in the meantime had learned the value of the pulp, and were willing to buy it. The crop last year was a very disappointing one, as compared with that of the previous year, and the stuff was not available. Another group actually bought from abroad in order to fulfill contracts which they had made to deliver pulp in England. The group that he first mentioned, he understood, attempted to do so, but were not able to get delivery, and, consequently, in some cases they were unable to complete the contracts which they had allowed to be made on their behalf. Those, as he understood it, were briefly the facts of the position. As a director of several factories he knew that they would never send a pocketful of pulp abroad if they could sell it in England, because it was in the interests of the factory, as well as of the country, that it should be used on the farms which grew the beet.

MR. E. W. SHEPPERSON, M.P., wished to state his views as to the useful functions which the Society could perform. There were in the sugar beet industry two interests. The interest of the factory and also the interest of the grower. The factory and the grower together were mutually interested in the future of the whole sugar beet industry, but undoubtedly the factories were bound to look at the future prosperity of the industry as it affected their incomes. Then, too, growers were bound to look at the future prosperity of the industry to see how it would affect them. The factories had an organisation to look after their interests, and the growers had an organisation—the National Farmers' Union—to look after theirs. In his opinion, it would be useful to the industry to combine the interests of the two sides, and he thought that the Society afforded a means by which they might be brought together, and that, therefore, the continued existence of the Society would be useful to the industry as a whole.

MR. J. E. HODGKIN (Managing Director of Sugar Beet and Crop Driers, Ltd.) thought that possibly the allusion by the Chairman to the De Vecchis process might lead to some misapprehension. The process with which he himself was associated was entirely distinct, and he would like that to be made clear. It would be unfortunate if the two processes were confused in the minds

of those interested in the sugar beet industry. During the last season not a full, but a sufficient programme had been carried out to demonstrate satisfactorily the practicability of the method of drying beet and extracting the sugar, so as to employ labour throughout the year, and in addition, the cost of the machinery to deal with the sugar extraction was reduced. The process provided a new hope for the sugar beet industry in this country. He said that advisedly, because everybody realised that there was a great deal of feeling in the country in reference to the subsidy. If the industry was to be a permanent factor of English agriculture, something must be done to provide a substitute for the present subsidy. What he wanted to suggest was that the experiments which had been conducted on a large scale at Oxford were of interest to the whole industry. He would like to invite any gentleman present to go down and see what was being done there, to see the extraction of the sugar within about eight hours from the dried beet, and to see the beet cossettes in stores. The object in doing the work had not been entirely to make profit, although those interested hoped that they would get profit for themselves and their friends. It had been largely a patriotic motive with the idea of helping the industry in this country and of being of service to a very promising industry.

THE CHAIRMAN said that he, personally, and, he was sure, his colleagues also, were very appreciative of Mr. Hodgkin's contribution to the proceedings. He (the Chairman) was not competent to discuss the matter fully. He only had, on behalf of the Committee, to allude to the fact that they knew the experiment referred to. He hoped that his observations did not lead to the misconception that he regarded the process as being the De Vecchis process. If his memory served him rightly, he said that last year mention was made of the De Vecchis process, that experiments had been conducted in connection with it, and that considerable improvements had been effected. Some of his colleagues and he himself would gladly avail themselves of the invitation given by Mr. Hodgkin to pay a visit to the works at Eynsham in order that they might improve their knowledge and become more serviceable to the great sugar beet industry. He agreed with Mr. Hodgkin that while most of them had a very keen eye on the main chance, their duty as members of the Society was to harmonise that quest with the public interest.

His friend Mr. Oliver had referred to observations made in the House of Commons respecting the employment created by the industry. He (the Chairman) thought that the question had been dealt with fully in the House of Commons, and that the rejoinder was a matter of fairly common knowledge. The Committee would take note of the fact, and if in next year's Report it was felt desirable, would incorporate some information as to the increased employment provided by the industry. Mr. Runciman, in his criticism, entirely lost sight of the additional employment provided on the land. Those who knew Mr. Runciman looked upon him as one of our best public men; but throughout the whole of his career he had had the very facile capacity of overlooking the vital interests of British agriculture. (Laughter.) He (the speaker) had experience of his right honourable friend in the House of Commons, and had crossed swords with him on the question more than once. While expressing personal admiration for him, he regarded him as a rather distorted mentality.

Unless agriculture was restored to the high position occupied by British shipping and other interests, the decline of this country was nearing.

He was able to support the observations of his friend Sir George Courthope on the question of the consumption of beet pulp in this country. All the Factory Companies desired that the beet pulp should be consumed

in this country, but after all a Factory Company was a business proposition, and if the British farmer would not take the pulp it had to be sold elsewhere, or the shareholders would call the poor directors to account and they would be deprived of their positions. In the course of his introductory observations he pointed out that the Society was once actually engaged in the trade of sugar pulp. It tried to popularise it at that time, and it would continue its endeavours. He would like it to go forth from the Meeting that those of them who were connected with Factory Companies would prefer that the beet pulp should be consumed in this country and that they should not be faced with the imperative necessity of disposing of the surpluses abroad because of their inability to secure adequate markets here.

He did not think there was any point that had been raised which he had overlooked. He would ask all who agreed to the adoption of the Report to signify the same in the usual manner.

Carried unanimously.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now I have to ask you to appoint the officials for the ensuing year. We have been extraordinarily fortunate in securing Lord Ernle as President of this Society. Everybody at all interested in agriculture will recall with gratitude Lord Ernle's occupancy of the post of President of the Board of Agriculture in this country. I read with great gratification Lord Ernle's defence of the farmer the other day. After all the British farmer requires a little defence now and then, because this country is lopsided. That is to say, more noses are aggregated in towns than are distributed through the countryside, and as democracy consists principally of counting noses the majority of noses secure the greater attention of the politician. Therefore it is gratifying to have as our President a gentleman who understands agriculture and is always prepared to defend those who are engaged in it.

We have a list of Vice-Presidents, to which Lord Ullswater has consented to be added. Mr. Malcolmson has also been nominated. (The list was read.) May I take it that you approve the continuance of those gentlemen as Vice-Presidents? ("Agreed.")

The Executive Committee is as follows. (The list was read.) Mr. Norton, Mr. Lamb, and Mr. Williams have retired. Mr. Malcolmson and Mr. A. Wood have been added. There are also the co-opted members and factory representatives as follows. (The list was read.) I submit that it is a good selection. If anybody desires further additions will he kindly forward the names to the Secretary. I should mention that Mr. Malcolmson has accepted the position of Treasurer. May I take it that you approve these lists? ("Agreed.") You will see that every interest in the industry is represented on the Committee, and if gentlemen would make a point of attending they could present any question for consideration by the Committee, who would tender their advice, and we are sure would be able to guide the parties to a more satisfactory solution of their difficulties than could be obtained if the Society did not exist.

I will now ask Mr. Harris to accept the custody of the Mason Cup and accept as a gift a replica of the Cup as a souvenir of his great achievement.

COLONEL ROYDS: I would like to tell Mr. Harris that Mr. Roberts omitted to say that the donor of the replica is our Chairman himself. (Cheers.)

Mr. H. H. HARRIS (Besford): Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I can hardly express to you how pleased I am that I have won this Cup. I had a shot for it two years ago, when I was fortunate enough to win the first prize for the West Midlands or growers for Kidderminster, and I was naturally "bucked" about that. Last year I was told that the Mason Challenge Cup had been held in the Eastern Counties since its inception, and I thought

we could pull it into the Midlands. I had a shot for it and have done it, and I am very proud of it, from a Midlander's point of view. (Applause.) When I heard from your Secretary that I had won this Cup, I thought that there might not have been many competitors; but I am the more pleased after the remarks which have been made as to the number of entries. I suppose that I have got land which is highly adaptable to the growth of the crop which, coupled with the assistance I received at home, has enabled me to "pull it off."

The Chairman and other gentlemen mentioned that they and the public generally would like to know the variety of soil and the manner of cultivation of this crop. I think that I am right in saying that my 1925 crop was a record crop officially, and has never been equalled in this country in the weight of sugar per acre. That justifies me in saying that my land must be highly adaptable for sugar beet growing.

There is another point that I wish to refer to. I think that it is rather an important one. You get the factory representatives around you imploring you to grow so many acres. My point is that it is not acres they want but tons. I made a contract to grow fifteen acres; but after considering the labour facilities in my vicinity, I came to the conclusion that I should be very foolish to try to grow a large acreage and neglect it. That is the reason why I hold that it is not acres that you want but tons.

With those few remarks, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you very very much for the way in which you have taken the win, and I tell the Eastern County growers that they must work hard another year or else we shall keep the Cup in the Midlands.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think that that concludes the business. I have made an omission I ought to have pointed out that there were sixty-seven entries in the competition. That makes the achievement of Mr. Harris even more outstanding than I intimated. I am very glad that the Cup has gone to the West, because after all we Easterners like to give the Westerners a little encouragement now and then. (Laughter.) We are told in the Old Book that the wise men come from the East. My friend, Mr. Harris, may not have migrated from the East to the West, but that remarkable wisdom which generally permeates the Easterners has evidently percolated now to the Western side of our country.

MR. WILLIAM D. CLARK (Berwick-on-Tweed): Before we separate might I ask you to state for the benefit of some of the growers, in what way you intend to bring them into the Society. I always understood that this was a Society more for the factories.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want this to be made perfectly clear. I should be very sorry if it were imagined anywhere that the Society represents factories only. The Society represents all interests in the industry. We have individual membership. The subscription for that is one guinea a year. The members of the Society include even public persons who are interested in the industry but who are not directly associated with it. Anybody is free to join it. Mr. Chadwin, whom perhaps I may now take the opportunity of introducing to you as the successor of our friend, Mr. Wood, will be pleased to receive applications. We are very conservative in this Society (I do not mean politically) and we adhere to old friendships and we do not make changes very lightly. We regret Mr. Wood leaving us; but we are satisfied that in Mr. Chadwin we have a worthy successor to him. I can testify to his energy. We are very fortunate in having him. I am sure that anybody anxious to obtain knowledge about the Society and to secure membership will be gratified at meeting him. (Applause.)

The Meeting then terminated.

ANNUAL LUNCHEON.

THE PRESIDENT proposed "The King," and the toast was loyally received.

THE PRESIDENT, proposing the toast of "The British Sugar Beet Industry," said:—Ladies and Gentlemen, as the President of the British Sugar Beet Society, I hope you will allow me, on behalf of the Society, to wish you all a hearty welcome. This is the first meeting of the reconstituted British Sugar Beet Society. The Society has given up its financial interests in the industry, and it now exists to promote the interests of the industry itself among the growers, the manufacturers, and the general public. It is hoped that it will be a more efficient aid to the industry because it is financially disinterested. All the best assets of the old Society it has carried on. Among those assets one of the most valuable is the Chairman of the Executive Committee, Mr. George Roberts. (Cheers.) I hope that it is an earnest of the future of the Society that it thus shows that it knows a good thing when it has it, and means to stick to it.

It is a source of great pride to me that I have been asked to become the President of the Society. It is the privilege—in fact, it is the duty—of a President to be as dull as a heavy father. I wish that all duties were as easy to perform, and I may add I wish that all duties were as conscientiously performed. On the other hand, I am aware, only too well aware of the object of an after-luncheon speech. It is intended to secure to those who have lunched a "close time" for digestion, and the more witty and humorous a speech, the more easy and rapid is that process. Other nations achieve the same end by different means. The Ancient Romans had a warm bath and massage. (Laughter.) The Italians have a siesta. I believe that in India they rely on the performance of nautch girls. (Renewed laughter.) That is one of the reasons why I most deplore the absence of the Secretary of State for India, because he could have confirmed the statement. In England we are a practical people, and we sacrifice the digestion of an individual to the digestions of the luncheon party. I am pulled in two ways. As President it is my duty, as I say, to be dull; as an after-luncheon speaker I have to try to some extent to avoid that danger.

There is yet another capacity in which I stand before you. A couple of hours ago I thought that I was only to introduce to you the Earl of Birkenhead, and I felt that I might be as dull as I liked, as he would be sure to enliven the company and give them the close time for digestion. But I was told that I was also, in his regrettable absence, which we all deplore—and none of us half so sincerely as I do—to propose the toast of the British Sugar Beet Industry. That is a very difficult thing to do at rather short notice in the presence of men, many of whom I know are much better acquainted with the industry on its practical side than I can hope to be. But at all events I can claim this when I look round on the youthful fresh-coloured guests at this luncheon party, that I have been acquainted with and interested in the industry for a longer period than anyone in this room. If I were to do what old men are always tempted to do—that is, indulge in reminiscences—I could tell you of life on a French farm fifty-one years ago when I went to stay with one of the most famous agriculturists of the day, M. Vion, a few miles north of Péronne, where the

sugar industry was carried on. I was so fully convinced, even then, of what the industry might become if we could put it on a financial footing in this country, that when I was Minister of Agriculture I did my best in that direction. Unfortunately for me—fortunately, perhaps, for you—the years of my office were exceptional war years, in which we had to resort to exceptional methods of farming. But I had six months of peace, and during that period the Government set the example of advancing money to found a nascent industry, and that industry was the sugar beet industry. Now it has developed, and I am glad to say has become a large industry, and, I hope I may say, on the whole a prosperous industry. I know that last year was not a favourable one; I know, for instance, that the roots came up fangy, and that it was very difficult to clear them of dirt, so that you had to pay a higher price for sending your beets to the factory. But, though a farmer is a pessimist in his language, he must be an optimist at heart. He could not exist if he was not. May I appeal to you when you are very much depressed, to think of the Prophet Jonah. Jonah was down in the mouth—very far down in the mouth—but he came up again all right. (Laughter.) And so may it be with the British farmer.

I have an opportunity of raising a point which I feel is likely to be of the utmost importance to the industry. It is a point which a President raises in his capacity of heavy father. His most painful addresses as a heavy father are generally on the subject of accounts. It is also a subject which, when, as a luncheon entertainer, I introduce it, will give most of us, unless we are lucky enough to have money in the Cantley factory or in Courtauld's, an uncomfortable time, and it is a subject which is likely to give any farmer an acute attack of indigestion.

I want to appeal to the National Farmers' Union to use their great, their growing, and their useful influence among farmers to get growers to furnish them with accounts of the direct cost of growing sugar beet. Of course, if you mention accounts to a farmer it makes him shiver; but I want him to eliminate from the accounts all those items which make farming accounts so difficult. I want him simply to deal with the direct costs of growing sugar beet; that is to say, he need not worry about how much he is to carry to the general expenses of management; he need not worry about the wear and tear of implements; he need not worry about the values which the previous crop has left in the soil or the values which the beet crop leaves behind it. None of those things need he go into. He has only to tell you what the direct costs are. You will find, I believe, that the direct costs of growing a sugar beet crop may be gathered up under these heads:—First, there are the cultivation, then the cleaning, then the harvesting. Those three items put together will amount to a liberal third of the total expense. Then there is the transport—the cartage and the railway charges. That is another third. Those four heads make up a good two-thirds of the expense. Then you take another four items—seed, manure, rent and rates, and the growers' representative. When you have found those expenses you have to put against them the weight of the beet that you have produced

and the prices you have got for it. The result is your direct profit or your direct loss. If from all parts of the country you could furnish, not a Government official, but the National Farmers' Union, with those figures, I venture to say your representatives in that Union would go into negotiations with tripled strength. You have to negotiate in time to come with the factory, with the railways, with the nation itself. Give your National Farmers' Union those figures and they will develop, if I may say so, a "punch" which will be as satisfactory to themselves as it will be surprising to the negotiators across the table. I make that appeal to the National Farmers' Union.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the growing of sugar beet really depends upon three things—the farmer, the farm and the season, and the season calls the tune all the time. But, apart from that, farms, of course, differ in their capacity for growing beet, and still more importantly in their accessibility to the nearest factory. But, after all, the great item is the farmer. If the farmer is experienced he will probably make the crop pay. Until he has experience his success will certainly be more doubtful. I would appeal to farmers to pool their experiences. Let every man who starts on this experiment, on which, as I believe, a vast deal of the future of British agriculture depends, help his neighbour to try the experiment and to make it successful.

Seed is one of the most important, if not the most important, ingredient in success. The seed of sugar beet is one of the fairy tales of science. In 1812, when the great French chemist Achard started sugar beet in France, the sugar beet root was a little tiny thing weighing a few ounces and holding a very small sugar content. To-day in Germany the Germans harvest as much sugar from one acre as Achard could harvest from seventeen acres. That is the progress that the industry has made in the root itself.

Another great feature and a most important one in the industry is manure. I should think that we do not use a quarter of the manure in this country for the sugar beet crop that is used on the Continent. I know, of course, the practical difficulties which will probably be instantly mentioned. You are afraid of your soil getting sour, and so on. Abroad it is mainly nitrogenous manure that is used, and it is to the nitrogenous manure that they look for their very large yields. When I say that in this country I believe the average yield per acre is eight tons and that in Germany it is from twelve to thirteen, you will see at once that in that margin there is for British farmers, if they can make the crop pay at eight tons, very great scope for success in the future. It is my hope, and the hope of everyone interested in the industry, that we shall in the course of a very few years be able to approximate to the German yield.

There are many other points on which I might, if I dared, venture to talk to you, such as the choice of your land and when to get your crop up. On the latter point I may say that many of you who last season left the crop in late in the hope of a bigger yield were grievously disappointed. Those are some of the practical points which you will learn by experience, each in your own district, each on your own farm, and until you have learned them and can put them into practice, we cannot hope for a very large advance in the very satisfactory average that we have already obtained in the production of the crop. What the crop has to offer the British farmer is a sure market and an ascertained price in cash. Where else can you find them? Therefore, I say, do not let a temporary depression, a temporary fit of pessimism, prevent you from going on trying the experiment.

Sugar beet farming will do more for agriculture than appears quite on the surface. It is the greatest education that exists in our great industry as to the advantages and the methods of intensive farming. In other words,

it is a tremendous help to British agriculture to raise its general level to that high standard among our farmers of which we are so justly proud. It is the difference between the general level and the best standard attained in this country, which is the thing that we most want to remedy to-day.

I think that perhaps there is one word I ought to say on the position of sugar refiners. I see that among the names of those who are present as our guests to-day is the honoured name of Lyle. (Cheers.) If and so far as our industry can be shown to have injured the refining industry, it is a matter of deep regret; but to my mind what is happening is that the sugar refining industry is going through the same process which many of our industries have already passed through. That is to say, foreign producers are no longer satisfied to send the raw material to this country. They concentrate it in one process and refine it where it is produced. That is the mischief. I very much hope that the great sugar refiners will help us by meeting the position in the best practicable way, and that is growing the raw sugar which they desire on our own land and using it in their refineries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, if I had known yesterday that I was to make a speech to you to-day on this big subject I would have made it much shorter. It has had to be long, because, if any of you know the ways of people who are trying to speak, you know that they have to be finding the way on to the next subject the whole time. The result is that one makes a long speech instead of a short one. But, such as it is, it is the speech with which I venture to propose the health of the British Sugar Beet Industry, and I desire to couple with it the name of Colonel Royds. (Loud cheers.)

The toast was enthusiastically accepted.

LIEUT.-COLONEL E. ROYDS: Mr. Lord Ernle, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen—when I say "ladies," may I say that for the first time we are privileged to have our meeting here graced by the presence of ladies? We deem it a privilege indeed.

It is my privilege on behalf of the industry to express our warm thanks to Lord Ernle for the handsome way in which he has proposed the toast, and for his interesting and illustrative speech. Lord Ernle said that we were lucky in having a good man like Mr. Roberts as the Chairman of our Executive Committee, and that when we knew a good man we stuck to him. We knew a good man when we selected Lord Ernle as our President, and we mean to stick to him. (Cheers.)

Lord Ernle also referred to one or two matters, which, perhaps, I had better deal with first. He impressed on us the importance of keeping accounts, and said that when farmers had to deal with accounts it gave them indigestion. As a farmer in Lincolnshire, I can bear out what Lord Ernle said, and I quite agree with him in regard to the importance he attaches to accounts.

There is one thing I might mention in connection with the cost of sugar beet and the proceeds from it. He omitted to say that we had to take into account the value of the tops. We attach an enormous value, an increasing value each year, to the tops of the sugar beet. I had an opportunity this morning after the meeting of saying a word to Mr. Harris—whom we all desire, I am sure, to congratulate as the winner of the Mason Cup. Mr. Harris told me that he valued his tops at £5 an acre for the purpose of feeding the pigs for which he is so justly famed. Lord Ernle suggested that we should disseminate information, and I think that that little piece of information might be most valuable. I am sure that Mr. Harris will not mind my repeating in public what he told me rather in private.

This large and influential gathering here to-day, representing as it does the flower of the industry, is, I think, itself strong evidence in support of the decision which we came to to keep the Society in existence. I

have always held the view, and do firmly hold the view that if the Society had terminated its existence, the sugar beet industry itself would have suffered a very severe loss. I am sure that I need not tell you that we are doing all we can to strengthen the Society and to make it at least as useful in the future as, if not more useful than, it has been in the past. I quite agree with what our Chairman said this morning at the meeting, that very important questions are arising and will arise with which the Society will have to deal, and that if it was not in existence there would be no other body capable of dealing with them.

One of the matters which have arisen just lately is that rather a severe attack has been made in and out of Parliament on the industry itself, and especially on the basis of the subsidy. That attack was made on very ill-informed data, and by people with, as it seemed to me, a lack of perspective. It is one of the very first duties of this Society to supply correct data and place it before the public, because the whole basis for the subsidy was that capital was timid, that the industry was a new one, that it required encouragement and support, and if capital was to flow to the industry its credit must be assured. The attacks which have been made on the industry have already had rather a serious effect. Our industry up to the present has made most rapid and almost unexpected progress, and it would be a thousand pities if its progress was arrested in any way at all. We were hoping to have four new factories this year. I understand now that we are only likely to have one, and I am told that the attacks which have been made have had the effect of deciding people not to place their capital in an industry which was immediately to be, or was likely to be, the subject of attack. Capital, we know, is notoriously shy and timid. The duty of this Society, as I have said, is to repel that attack and to place before the country and all persons concerned correct information. When reliable and correct information and data are forthcoming, men's minds will be disabused, and, in my opinion, the credit of the industry will be restored. There is, I think, nothing to prevent it.

We are experiencing at this time the first reduction in the subsidy. Speaking as a grower, and I speak in that capacity now, we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that there is some dissatisfaction with the prices proposed. Of course, I should like to get a better price than I am going to have—that goes without saying. We all want to sell in the dearest market, and we all want to buy in the cheapest. That is only human nature, natural and very proper. Nevertheless, I decided quite a considerable time ago to grow 180 acres of sugar beet this year, which is rather in excess of the quantity that I grew last year. (Cheers.) One of the reasons that influenced me in that decision was this. We had, as Lord Ernle, stated, a very trying and severe winter. We had frost and snow and a great deal of wet. I had always previously doubted whether beet tops would afford keep for sheep in a severe winter of that character, because in Lincolnshire, where I live, we put our sheep on to beet tops and they carry them pretty well as long as a moderate crop of turnips would on light land. I never liked to reduce the turnip crop very considerably, because I always thought we might encounter a severe winter, and I did not know what would be the result. But although we have had this bad winter, we have had this experience, which I think is of the very greatest value—that certainly on the light land the beet tops did not suffer materially in consequence of the weather, and they carried the sheep just as long and as well as they were carried in previous seasons. I went up very often to a 500-acre farm which I have on Lincoln Heath to see how the tops were going on. I spoke to the foreman one day about the stone walls being down, and I said: "If you do not repair those walls you will have the sheep all over the heath." He replied: "There will

never be a sheep leave a field as long as there is a beet top left." The sheep, I may say, came off the beet tops looking as least as well as, if not better than, they would have done off turnips. I hope you will not think I am egotistical and talking about myself. I have to give my own experiences, and before I ventured to get on my legs to give you these experiences, I spoke to a number of my neighbours, and I have been about and used my eyes and my intelligence also. The result of the experience of this rough winter is that I feel justified in reducing the area that would have this year been under turnips and intend growing beet in place of them, relying on the beet tops for sheep feed, as we feel this season has justified us in so doing. (Cheers.) What does that mean? It means that against the cost of my beet crop I can set the sum of money which my turnip crop would have cost me had I grown it. That being the case, the result from your beet crop, even if you have only a moderate crop, should be quite satisfactory.

When you talk of the average production in this country and compare it with the Continent, you have to remember that we are growing beet here on good land and bad land, and bad farmers and good farmers are growing it. By degrees we shall learn what land is most suitable for beet, and we shall know better how to grow it. I have no doubt, Sir, that your hope will be realised, and that in the course of years, I do not say a very few years, we shall not only grow a beet crop equal to that grown in Germany and other countries on the Continent, but we shall exceed it.

There is another experience also which has been gained—certainly by me—this year. I have noticed what a very profitable crop the beet crop is for a small holder or a small farmer to grow. I have one or two small tenants myself, and they have been growing two or three acres of beet. Where I have been producing, it might be, eight or possibly ten tons to the acre, they seem to have produced twelve to fourteen tons to the acre on two or three acres of land similar to mine. That is by more intensive cultivation. Now just think what the advantage of a beet crop is to a small holder. He has no marketing to do. He knows what price he is going to get. He may have, and probably has, little labour to pay. He has to devote a good deal of his own time to it, I know; but he gets exactly the same price for what he produces and exactly the same conditions as the largest and best farmer in the land, and that he cannot get for his other crops, or very seldom can. I happened to hear, from a friend, of a small holder in Yorkshire. He came to my friend the other day and said, "On two acres of land I grew enough beet last year to pay my rent for two years." The small holder, as Lord Ernle knows very well, is held in very great affection, at any rate professedly, by all political parties, and I think in the interest of the small holder himself and also in the interest of the industry and of all us, big farmers and small, it is most essential that we should rope in as many growers as possible, and that we are doing a great deal to help the smallholder if we encourage him to come in, provided that he has land that is suitable for growing beet. We know that that is essential. If we are, as members of a County Council or other body, or as private owners, establishing small holdings, let us try to establish them somewhere convenient to a beet factory where there is land suitable for the purpose. By that means we shall have in the industry a very considerable increase in the number of growers, and that will all inure to the stability of the industry and the future of it.

It is also very important indeed that we should have complete confidence in the growers' representatives. The growers' representatives at the present time are appointed by the National Farmers' Union. We growers pay what I consider a handsome contribution towards the cost of those growers' representatives. I do not say

it is too much, but we pay a penny a ton, and it comes to a good many thousands a year when you calculate the number of tons that are produced. The National Farmers' Union, I am glad to say, have appointed of late years good chemists to be the growers' representatives at the factories. Assistants are also appointed. It is most essential that all information with regard to the appointments of growers' representatives and their assistants should be at the disposal not only of the members of the National Farmers' Union but of all growers of sugar beet and organisations representing them, because in the interests of all concerned and of the industry there should be the most complete confidence in the growers' representatives.

We have reorganised the British Sugar Beet Society, and our Executive Committee are magnanimous enough to invite new members to join at the totally inadequate fee of one guinea per annum! We have not waited for legislation on the subject, but we have set up a "tote" of our own in the person of Mr. Chadwin, our excellent Secretary. (Cheers.) He is sitting down now over there, but when he stands up he is a good six feet high! There he is. Nobody can possibly mistake him. Mr. Chadwin is ready to receive any money that you may be pleased to put "on," and to do business with anybody who is prepared to become a backer of this Society. You will all be backing the same horse, and you will all have a good run for your money. I think you will all be rewarded sevenfold, because by your support you will be increasing the credit and security of the industry which we are all anxious to see firmly established and prosperous for all time. (Cheers.)

MR. G. H. ROBERTS: My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am charged once again to perform the very pleasing duty of moving a vote of thanks to our Chairman. I do not like to tell you on how many occasions I have had to do this, but I would ask you to accept the assurance that, as gladly as I have done it on previous occasions, never have I been happier in so doing. We are very fortunate in having Lord Ernle with us. We deeply deplore the absence of Lord Birkenhead to-day, with his versatile and incomparable gifts. Illness has deprived us of that. I am booking him, I hope, for some future occasion. At any rate, he will not elude me if it is at all possible for me to prevent it, but we are very fortunate in the fact that our President for this year is able to act, not only as President, but as a substitute for Lord Birkenhead. As I look round the tables at these beautiful flowers I realise that none of them can exist without sunshine, and we in this Society know that we cannot flourish without the support of gentlemen of influence and distinction such as our President. We are indeed grateful to him. I knew him in the House of Commons. He has just reminded me of the fact that at one time I was deputed year after year to follow him in the great speeches which he used to deliver there. In his very generous fashion he has stated that I followed him fairly well. In turn I acknowledge that it was the excellent example that he had set me which enabled me to acquit myself at all creditably. In Lord Ernle, as we know, we have a man who is expert in agricultural questions, and a gentleman of great scholarly attainments, but to me, Sir, the greatest quality of all is the fact that we can say that you are an Englishman after our own hearts.

I want to take the opportunity of emphasising the point made by Colonel Royds. It has been decided to continue the Society. We have willingly yielded to a

very powerfully expressed desire. We are prepared to give our services and such ability as we possess. We look to you to find the essential sinews of finance in order to maintain the Society in the dignified and distinctive position that it has occupied in public affairs in this country for many years. Therefore I hope that the appeal by my friend Colonel Royds will evoke a splendid response.

There is just one other point. It has been asserted that there is some little difference between various sections of the industry. It is the purpose of the Society to dispel those differences if it is at all possible. We are a harmonising body. I recognise the impossibility of absolutely reconciling every interest in an industry, but we can, with the characteristic spirit of compromise, reach something which is tolerably acceptable. The services of the Society are at the disposal of every interest in the industry for that purpose. We are appreciative of the fact that the cultivators of this country have been passing through very troublous times; but I am also aware of this fact, that above the cloud with its shadow is the star with its light. The farming community have been experiencing extraordinary difficulties. We believe that with an enlightened public spirit we shall be able to assist the farmer to reconcile the principles of self-help and mutual co-operation to his individual benefit and that of the community as a whole. Because we are here for that purpose we are very appreciative of the services rendered to us by Lord Ernle. As my friend Colonel Royds has stated, Lord Ernle has placed his services at our disposal this year. We may ask him, we may press him—and, Sir, were I a little younger, I would boast that I was accomplished in the art of pressing, but I have too much snow on my human roof to boast over much to-day—to continue his association with us in the high position he is occupying to-day.

To the others, to all of you, we gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness for your presence, and we solicit from you the support which is essential to make this Society what it has been and what it can continue to be, namely, the guiding influence in the development of this great new industry. We want as little as possible to do with politics in the sense of partisanship, but we want to bring all sections of the community together. We have represented on the Committee each of the political parties in the State. That is an expression of the fundamental idea of this Society—to represent individual interests and reconcile them as far as practicable with those of national concern. The measure of success achieved so far, I believe, is an evidence of our capacity for the future.

Sir, we are immensely indebted to you for your presence here to-day, and for the scholarly, informative, instructive, and entertaining speech you have delivered on our behalf. We venture to express the very fond hope that you may be willing to place those gifts again and again at our disposal.

It is my duty to give you the toast of "Our Chairman," thanking him for his presence here to-day and for the signal services he has rendered to the Society and our great industry.

The toast was accepted with acclamation.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, I might make you a short speech or a long one. My short speech would be: Many thanks. My long one would be: Very many thanks to all of you. Both have the same meaning. I thank you.